



# Georgia Farm Service Agency Newsletter

December 2004

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## County Committee Advisors are Voice for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers

Georgia's County Committee (COC) Advisors play a major role in communicating FSA's message to socially disadvantaged groups across the State. Currently there are 141 minorities, male and female, serving in this capacity to ensure that the interests of socially disadvantaged groups are fairly represented.

The 2002 Farm Bill defines socially disadvantaged (SDA) producers as a group whose members have been subject to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group, without regard to their individual qualities. SDA producers have generally been defined to include: African-Americans; Hispanic Americans; Native Americans; Asian-Pacific Americans; Subcontinent Asian-Americans; and women.

Peach County Committee Advisor Magnolia McLendon has served as COC Advisor since 1998. She voices socially disadvantaged group problems and viewpoints to the COC so that these concerns are understood and considered when program decisions are made. During the COC election process, she helps to solicit nominees from minority, female and socially disadvantaged groups.

McLendon rarely misses the meetings and actively participates in the deliberations. She also attends as many meetings in the community as possible. She takes every opportunity to talk about FSA's programs and "what farmers mean to the community." She remembers getting very upset with a co-worker who was wishing it would not rain during a particularly dry, hot period. When asked where she was going to get her food that couldn't be grown without rain, the co-worker responded that she would just go to the store and buy her food in cans!

Born in Houston County in 1913, McLendon just celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. She grew up on the family farm in Bibb County purchased by her father in 1918, working with her parents, grandparents, and two brothers raising corn, cotton

and vegetables. In 1936, she graduated from Fort Valley Normal and Industrial now known as Fort Valley State University and began teaching at Bibb County High School. Her teaching career was short-lived because she got married and in those days, teachers could not be married!

In 1951, after a few years in Fort Valley and Macon, she and her family moved back to the family farm. She worked with her husband in the truck farming operation growing corn, sweet potatoes, soybeans, and other vegetables. She and her husband, who died in 1996, had one son, now deceased. She has 3 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren all living in the Fort Valley area. She still lives on the family farm and maintains the family home. Currently the farm has 55 acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and the remaining acres are rented.

McLendon does not know what the future holds for the family farm. She talked about the threat to the landowners and homeowners in the area because of a proposed Robbins Air Force Base expansion. The South Bibb Community Organization has been formed which she hopes will be able to stop the take over of land in the area so that the family farm can be passed on to future generations.

Each year in January, COC's submit to the State Committee nominees recommended to serve as Advisors for a 12-month period effective March 1. Nominees must:

- reside in the county and be actively participating in farming in the county
- be willing and able to serve, if appointed
- indicate in writing their willingness and ability to serve.

COC Advisors are extremely important in FSA's effort to ensure that all producers are aware of available programs and services.



# Director's Message- Technology, Computers & FSA

Recently at the Ag Expo in Moultrie, after the Bob White Quail Initiative Press Conference and farm tour, Administrator James Little, Deputy Administrator John Johnson and I had about one hour to walk through the exhibits and see a few of the demonstration plots. This was the first visit for John Johnson and at least the third for Administrator Little, and I don't know how many for me. One thing that strikes any one who goes through the Expo is the incredible amount of advanced technology on display. Tractors covering fields without drivers, placing exact fertilizer and chemical measurements as directed by satellite reconnaissance and new varieties of genetically engineered crops resistant to disease and insects, to name just one or two. Because of this rapid development and adaptation of new technology, American farmers feed more people at less cost than at any time in human history.

This display of new technology rapidly applied to today's farming operations means that the Farm Service Agency has to try and keep up with these changes and advancements as well. FSA must be able to provide you with the information needed, when you need it, to help you make timely decisions about your farming operation. Some of that new technology is making its way to your local FSA service center.

GIS/GPS systems, now being deployed in FSA service centers, identify the location and size of each field on record with FSA in your county and can also tell what commodity is being grown. This information will save time and effort and increase accuracy of FSA personnel to help process your farm records and hopefully lead to quicker processing of eligible payments. Soon you will be able to access all of your own records online so you can check to make sure FSA has all current and relevant information to keep you eligible for program payments.

The new Farm Loan Business Plans being deployed by Farm Loan programs means farmers will be able to go online and apply for loans without first having to visit the local office. You will be able to start your loan, access all the applicable forms and then track the status of your loan as it works its way through the system. If paperwork is missing or not signed you will be able to see it right away, and then the loan will be electronically transmitted to your bank, saving you many trips back and forth to the office or the bank.

And a new program that is being unveiled by Secretary Veneman and strongly supported by Deputy Administrator Johnson is the electronic Loan Deficiency Payments or eLDP for short. Not every commodity is currently online but by the beginning of 2005 we believe most will be. Corn and soybean eLDP's are currently available. Just last week the department held a multi-state meeting in Savannah, GA for the purpose of training FSA personnel on how to set-up eLDP's for cotton farmers. Essentially, once your account is set up, you can apply for an eLDP on line and minimize time and paperwork at your local FSA office.

All of these new online programs will be accessed through the USDA Customer Statement. To view your Customer Statement online, you will need to obtain a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 Account. This process is easy and starts online by creating a user ID and password and confirming an email sent to your account. For more information about any of these programs visit us online at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) or call your local FSA Service Center.

Sincerely,



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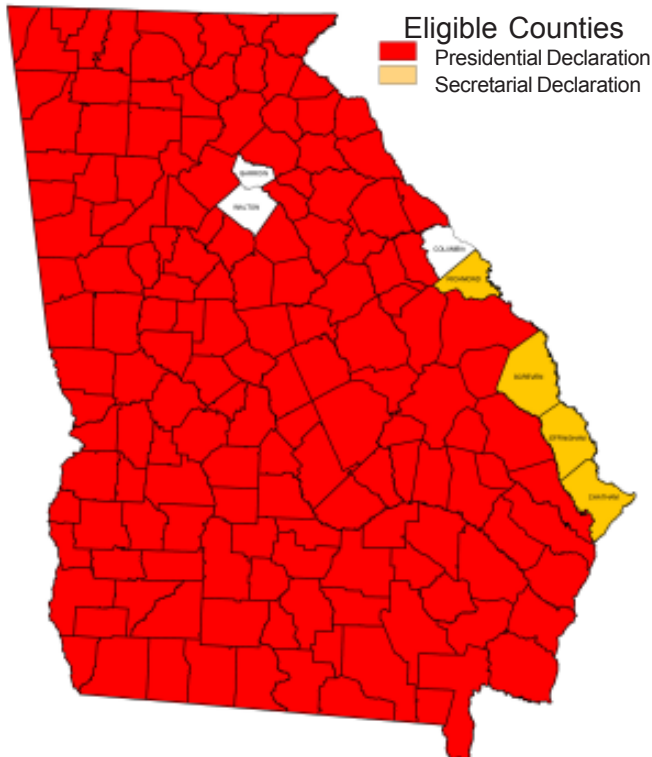
The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the main source for information contained in this educational newsletter. Eligibility and participation for all FSA programs is determined in accordance with FSA rules and regulations. Contact your local FSA Service Center to determine program eligibility. Editor: Stephanie L. Brown, GA FSA.

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## Emergency Loans Available

Emergency loans are available in the State of Georgia due to Hurricanes Frances, Ivan and Jeanne for eligible family farmers. If you experienced a loss due to the disasters, please contact your local FSA office for applications and additional information. Both Presidential and Secretarial declared counties are eligible for FSA Emergency Loans. Presidential declared counties are eligible for additional funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other sources.



Deadline	Designation
10-May-05	M1545 Amend. 4 & M1546
16-May-05	M1551
18-May-05	M1553 & M1554
23-May-05	M1549 Amend. 1
24-May-05	M1560
24-May-05	M1554 Amend. 1
25-May-05	M1551 Amend. 2
27-May-05	M1545 Amend. 9
31-May-05	M1554 Amend. 2
31-May-05	M1561 Amend. 2 & S1961
6-Jun-05	M1549 Amend. 4 & 5
7-Jun-05	M1566 & M1568
8-Jun-05	M1560 Amend. 2
14-Jun-05	M1554 Amend. 3
22-Jun-05	M1549 Amend. 7
28-Jun-05	S1961 Amend. 1

Please check with your local FS office to determine the designation that includes your county.

## Important Dates calendar for FSA Programs

### County Committee Elections:

- 6-Dec-04 Last day to return ballots
- 1-Jan-05 Elected Committee members take office

### Final Availability Dates for Loans and LDP's:

- 31-Jan Mohair, Peanuts, Unshorn Pelts & Wool
- 31-Mar Barley, Canolam Cranbe, Blackseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Sesame

### Final Crop Reporting Dates:

- 1-Mar Small grains, fall-seeded
- 15-Jul All crops, except small grains

### NAP Insurance Sales Closing Dates:

- 1-Dec Honey.
- 31-Jan All annually planted spring crops  
All annually planted warm season forage crops with an intended use of FG or GZ  
All warm season grass with an intended use of GZ included in crop code 0102 and 0296  
Tomatoes
- 28-Feb Cabbage (North)
- 1-Jun All annually planted crops planted in the fall and harvested the same year
- 1-Jul Cabbage (South)

### Conservation & Compliance:

- 1-Oct Sign-up begins for Conservation Reserve Program- Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative

### FSA Offices closed on the following holidays:

- 24-Dec-04 Christmas Holiday
- 31-Dec-04 New Year's Eve

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# Conservation & Compliance Programs

*Clark Weaver, Section Chief*

## **8600 Acres in Georgia Targeted for Quail Buffers**

U S Senator Saxby Chambliss and FSA Administrator James Little assisted in the Georgia kick-off of the CRP Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Buffer Program. The kickoff event was held in Moultrie Ga. on Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>. Enrollment in this CRP Buffer Initiative began on Oct. 1 of this year and is continuing in targeted Georgia counties. Interested landowners and producers may enroll a minimum of 30 feet and up to a maximum of 120 feet of borders (buffers) around the perimeter of eligible cropland. The cropland must have a documented cropping history in 4 of the years 96' through 01'. Applicants will enter into a 10 year contract to create and maintain suitable buffers which will be targeted as habitat for the Northern Bobwhite Quail and other endangered upland bird species.

Once the CRP contract is approved, the participant will receive an upfront signing bonus of up to \$10 per contracted year per acre not to exceed \$100 per acre. In addition, the participant will be paid an annual rental payment at the conclusion of each year of the contract. Contracts go into effect the month following approval. Contract may not exceed 10 years and 11 months. If any specific practices are required, the applicant will be eligible for reimbursement up to 90% of the installation cost. County offices will continue to accept enrollment until the limit of 8600 acres for Georgia has been met. Please contact your local County FSA office for specific details and to enroll.

## **Conservation Reserve Program 29th Sign-up**

The General CRP 29<sup>th</sup> sign-up period, which ran from August 30 to September 24, 2004 was recently concluded and producers with acceptable offers have been notified. 1.672 million acres were offered and 1.188 million acres were accepted into the CRP. Georgia had 246 CRP offers submitted representing 9,129.9 acres. 203 offers were accepted for 7,658.9 acres. This is one of the highest acceptance rates in the history of CRP, as 76 percent of the bids offered were accepted. These are the most fragile of cropland acres offered considering the environmental benefits of CRP.

In the selection process the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) is used to rank CRP offers. The environmental factors are: (1) soil erosion; (2) water quality; (3) enduring benefits; (4) air quality; and (5) wildlife enhancement. All offers were ranked on the same basis and offers with an EBI score of at least 248 were acceptable for enrollment.

CRP offers accepted under this sign-up may become effective either on October 1, 2005, or October 1, 2006. These contracts will run between 10 to 15 years with annual rental payments and cost share assistance for establishing long-term conservation practices. The weighted average rental rate for all accepted offers under signup 29 for a Georgia CRP participant is \$43.00 per acre.

## **Emergency Conservation Program**



The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) has been requested by 81 County FSA Committees and approved for program implementation by the National FSA Office in Washington DC. A total of \$8,576,550 has been requested for hurricanes, high wind, and torrential rainfall in September. Georgia has received \$4.8 million in Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funds in the first program rollout of funds. These funds are provided under the 2005 Emergency Hurricane Supplemental Appropriations Act.

ECP assists in the repair of damaged farmland and orchards caused by severe weather conditions. The program provides financial and technical assistance to help participants clear debris from farmland and orchards, restore fences, restore conservation structures (terraces, pond dams, waterways) and grading, leveling, shaping farmland damaged by

a natural disaster. Eligible participants will receive cost-share assistance up to 75 percent of the cost of the approved practice, as determined by the local FSA County Committees.

More information on ECP and other disaster assistance programs is available at the local FSA County Offices and online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.



# FSA Online

## **EXPO visitors sign-up to access FSA accounts online**



Fort Valley State University (FVSU) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) partnered together at the Sunbelt Expo in Moultrie, Georgia on October 19 & 20 with FVSU providing the use of their satellite computer unit for FSA to assist customers to register and obtain their Level 2 Accounts for conducting business online. By conducting business online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, customers can fill out and submit electronic forms to their USDA Service Center for processing and access their Customer Statement. The Customer Statement is a summary of the customer's information such as contracts or conservation program participation information, year-to-date payments received from various USDA programs, etc.

Dr. Lillie Ward from Fort Valley State University assisted FSA employees by providing access to computers and announcing specified times FSA employees would be available to assist customers in registering to conduct USDA business online. Marcia Vaughn from the Georgia State FSA Office along with Janice Jones (Colquitt Co.), Pam Dennis (Mitchell Co.), Jan Clifton (Dougherty Co.), and Carole Davis (Worth Co.) helped customers register for their Level 2 Access and identity proofed customers to update them to a Level 2 Account.

## **Electronic Loan Deficiency Payment (eLDP's) Available as of September 20, 2004**

eLDP is a new optional service available to FSA Customers (producers). eLDP customers may use their own computer to submit applications to a central site for processing. Customers that do not own a computer may still use this function by allowing their administrative county office to enter their application for them. After the application is submitted online and calculations are completed, the payment is electronically routed to the customer's bank account. A customer (producer) must have a level 2 security eAuthentication prior to performing this service.

Level 2 access may be obtained by visiting [www.eauth.egov.usda.gov](http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov). At this site, the customer will complete the necessary steps to begin the process for level 2 access. Once these steps are completed, the customer will visit their local office. The county office will verify their credentials and complete the level 2 process.

Actions completed by the county office:

- Producer must sign up and approved for eLDP process
- Establish a customer profile (completed once each year)
- Must verify credentials for level 2

Customers may request an eLDP by submitting a completed CCC-634-E at the following web site [www.sc.egov.usda.gov](http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov) or have the county office process the electronic application for them. Applicants must have a valid email address.

**Eligible commodities are:** Wheat, barley, oats, corn, corn silage, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, all minor oilseeds, peanuts, dry peas, honey, wool, mohair, unshorn pelt. **Note:** Cotton is not an available crop at this time.

For further information, contact your local FSA office or visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda/daftp/psd](http://www.fsa.usda/daftp/psd)



*Beverly Reed in the Dooly County Service Center assisted Gene Roney in establishing a customer profile for accessing FSA accounts online at home.*

# *Farm Loan Programs*

*David Laster, Section Chief*

## **Fiscal Year 2004 Ends As a Success**

The final numbers are in for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 lending year. During FY 2004, Georgia's loan approval officials made 558 loans for a total amount of \$93,703,192. Both direct loans and guaranteed loans are included in these figures.

Guaranteed loans constituted 80% of all dollars loaned in Georgia with \$74,960,192 being loaned through the Guaranteed Loan Program. The program is very successful in Georgia and is illustrated by the partnership FSA has formed with so many agricultural lenders around the state. According to Georgia's Farm Loan Program Chief, David Laster, the Guaranteed Loan Program is a great example of how the USDA works with lenders at the local level to provide agricultural credit to our state's farmers and ranchers. It's truly a combination of a federal Agency and local lenders working together in a "grass roots" effort to support farmers, ranchers, and consequently, many local economies throughout the state.

### ***Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) Loan Eligibility***

To be eligible for a small grain LDP or commodity loan, you must have:

- Grown the crop
- Certified your crop acres
- Have beneficial interest in the crop. This means you have title, risk and control of the crop. If the crop is delivered to a buyer you have lost beneficial interest. If the buyer pays you for the crop, even if it hasn't moved from your farm, you have lost beneficial interest.
- An approved conservation plan with NRCS and completed a payment limitation form with FSA
- Signed a crop insurance waiver or purchased the minimum level of crop insurance

The commodity must meet the following guidelines:

- Be in existence and in a storable condition
- Be merchantable for food or feed
- Not be substituted or purchased

## **Direct Loan Processing**

Have you ever wondered what happens to your loan request once an application is completed? Does it go before a statewide loan committee or to Washington D.C. for approval? Does the local FSA County Committee review your loan request? In most every instance the decision to approve a loan request or recommend approval of a loan request is made by local FSA officials working in the eleven Farm Loan Program teams throughout the state.

The loan approval process is actually a two-phase process involving many facets that enables the local approval official to make his or her determination.

The first step in the process is to determine eligibility. A direct loan applicant must have sufficient education, training, or experience in managing and operating a farm or ranch that demonstrates the managerial ability needed to succeed in farming. The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, have the legal capacity to incur the obligations of the loan, be unable to obtain credit elsewhere, have an acceptable credit history, be the operator or tenant operator of a family farm after the loan is closed, not have had a previous loan which resulted in a loss to the government, and not be delinquent on any Federal debt. The applicant's operation must meet requirements such as being family farm size, producing an agricultural product or commodity, and meeting various environmental requirements.

The second phase involves making a determination that the proposed operation is feasible. The local loan approval official will utilize a farm business plan to help make this determination. A budget must show that enough income will be generated to sufficiently pay all operating expenses, including family living expenses, all taxes, and all debt obligations that are due during the projected business cycle. The proposed budget must be realistic and collateral to secure the loan must be adequate. Once all information is obtained by the local official, he or she can then make their approval determination.

## **Bank Account Changes?**

FSA payments are electronically transferred into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify the office if you close your account or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to your account and routing numbers.

# *Production Adjustment*

*Ronald Carey, Section Chief*

## **DCP Contract Reminder**

Producers: Are you planning to participate in the 2005 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program? If so, contact the county office staff to schedule an appointment to sign your 2005 DCP contract (CCC-509) before June 1, 2005. (You can sign your contract after June 1 and before Sept. 30, but you will be assessed a late-signing fee of \$100.)

When you sign the CCC-509, you are agreeing to:

- comply with highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation provisions on all your land;
- devote acreage equal to the base acreage to an agricultural or conserving use;
- effectively control noxious weeds and otherwise maintain base acres according to sound agricultural practices;
- not plant perennial fruits and vegetables or harvest annual FAVs (other than lentils, mung beans, and dry peas) or wild rice on base acres (Exceptions: Double-cropping covered commodities or peanuts with wild rice, fruits, or vegetables shall be permitted in any region in which there is a history of this type of double-cropping.);
- file acreage report with respect to all cropland on the farm; and
- notify the county office staff when there is a transfer of or change of interest of a producer.

The DCP contracts are not like the old seven-year Production Flexibility Contracts. You must designate shares and sign a new DCP contract each year.

## **Reporting Farm Changes**

It is also the producer's responsibility to notify FSA of ANY changes in their farming operation or entity status throughout the year. Changes that may affect a determination include, but are not limited to a change in contract shares of a contract which may reflect change of land lease from cash rent to share rent or from share rent to cash rent; modification of a variable/fixed bushel rent arrangement; a change in the size of the producer's farming operation by the addition or deletion of a farm; a change in the structure of the farming operation, including any change in the member's shares; a change in the contributions of farm inputs of capital, equipment, active personal labor, or active personal management; and a change of farming interest not previously disclosed on CCC-502 or update, including the farming interests of a spouse or minor child.

## **Tobacco Program**

On October 22, the President signed the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, which includes a provision for a buyout of tobacco quota. Federal regulations and program policies and procedures are currently being developed and will be finalized over the next several months.

A letter containing the basic provisions of the Act has been mailed to quota holders and producers. Frequently updated information can also be obtained at the web site <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/buyout/>.

Current 2004 tobacco marketing and price support programs will remain in effect through the end of the tobacco marketing season (June 30, 2005, for the flue-cured tobacco program; September 30, 2005, for burley tobacco). If you have not already done so, it is important that you turn in your flue-cured marketing cards to the issuing County Office so that 2004 marketings can be reconciled.

This newsletter will report on developments in buyout procedure, but you are encouraged to visit the web site above as it will be the most up-to-date source of information.

## *Regional News*

The Georgia Poultry Federation has teamed up with the University of Georgia to launch a new web page designed to facilitate the exchange of poultry litter throughout the state. The site - [www.galitter.org](http://www.galitter.org) - will allow poultry growers with litter to sell to post ads that can be viewed by potential buyers. Farmers and others who want to buy litter may also post ads on the new web page. Anyone who provides services such as poultry house clean-out, litter hauling, or spreading can participate by placing ads as well. This is a free service to all participants.

Poultry growers and buyers can post information in their ads such as services needed, amount of litter available or wanted, and location. Visitors to the site can browse the ads or conduct searches based on location or other factors.

For additional information, contact Abit Massey or Vice President Mike Giles at the Georgia Poultry Federation, 770/532-0473.

Georgia Farm Service Agency  
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Athens, Georgia 30601-2775

### ***Receive your LDP in half the time with new electronic LDP Service***

Cotton is Georgia's number one cash crop. FSA expects many producers to utilize Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's) for the 2004 cotton crop because of low cotton prices. As of November 8, over 3.7 million dollars had already been distributed for the 2004 Cotton Crop. LDP's are available when the local commodity prices are less than the National loan rate and the producer chooses to receive an LDP instead of a marketing assistance loan.

This year FSA introduces the eLDP - a new way for Cotton Producers to obtain their LDP's faster, with fewer visits to the FSA Service Center. Electronic LDP's for cotton will be available starting December 1, 2004. This voluntary service allows producer applications to be processed in a web-based environment by FSA's County Office employees.

FSA is encouraging producers to utilize this option because of the "quick" turn around for payments. A local direct deposit may take 2-3 days before reaching the producer's bank account. The National Payment Service

projects a 24 hour turn around for direct deposits requested via an eLDP. With this option, producers have their money almost immediately and payment limitation is updated in real time. This assists County Office employees in monitoring payment limitation and preventing the loss of benefits.

In order to take advantage of this new service, producers must complete a 'Customer Profile' in the local FSA office. The local FSA office will then be able to complete cotton application processing for producers. With these options, producers may go online and verify their payment records with the National Payment service. This service has stringent security measures to protect participants' private information, see the articles on page 5 for more information.

FSA encourages all producers with home internet service to complete a Customer Profile. On your next visit to the Service Center, please ask about signing up for this new service.